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FROM THE EDITOR. . .

With this volume of *Children's Folklore Review,* we begin our fifteenth year of publishing. For ten years, this publication was known as the *Children's Folklore Newsletter,* appeared three times a year, and ranged from four to eight pages in length; for the next two years, the format of publication was the same, but the frequency of publication decreased to twice yearly and the title changed to the present one. In 1990, Dr. W. Keats Sparrow, then Head of the English Department and now Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, increased East Carolina University's support; he gave us the go-ahead to set *CFR* up as a desk-top publication in journal format and have it photographed and bound at a local printing facility. At some point, perhaps for the twentieth or the twenty-fifth anniversary, someone will have to prepare a history of the Children's Folklore Section and the *Children's Folklore Review.*

In addition to marking the fifteenth year of publication, the present volume of *CFR* is important as the first one with a guest editor. Judith Haut, current President of the Children's Folklore Section and Chair of the Children's Folklore Section's panel at the 1991 American Folklore Society meeting in S t. John's, Newfoundland, pulled together and edited the four papers from that session and requested Simon Bronner, respondent to the panel, to write down his remarks. The result is, I think, a fine collection of essays on children's narrative, not so much on the actual stories that children tell, but more on process of narration itself-where it comes from, how it is used, and what forces may (or may not) be shaping it. In the past, much has been taken for granted concerning children and their narratives, and much of that has been based on studies of adults and their narratives; as these essays show, children have their own voices which may sometimes fail to correspond to adult expectations but which should be studied as much for the failures to correspond as for the successes.

CFR is now recognized as a scholarly journal by the Modem Language Association, and articles published in *CFR* will be included in future MLA bibliographies. That is not only a good thing for *CFR,* but a very good thing for the study of children's folklore.

C.W. Sullivan III

Children as Narrators: Literature, Media and Ethnography

Judith Haut, Guest Editor

An appropriate subtitle for this special issue might be "Resources for and Representations of Child Narrators." Working from diverse perspectives, the authors represented in this volume look at ways in which children are documented as narrators and seek to understand the breadth of early experiences which potentially contribute to a child's understanding and use of narrative.

The articles published in this special issue of *Children's Folklore Review* were presented at the 1991 meeting of the American Folklore Society in St. John's, Newfoundland, Simon Bronner served as respondent; his comments are presented following the papers. The articles are printed here in the order in which they were presented at the meeting.

Priscilla Ord opens with an inquiry into an unexpected source of data about child narrators; how they are depicted in children's literature. In her overview of Victorian and contemporary literature, she finds that children's verbal narrating receives less attention than their dramatic or imitative play. C. W. Sullivan III hypothesizes about the relationship of children's early, informal narrative experiences and their ability to understand a sense of narrative structure. He posits that early experiences-hearing nursery lore, learning the proper sequence of the alphabet-all contribute to a child's sense of tale telling and, possibly, reading. Drawing upon her fieldwork with children aged four to six, Elizabeth Tucker examines the effect of the media, specifically video-tapes, on the storytelling repertoire and style of young children. Hardware and software have seemingly made a big impression. Finally, Judith Haut employs a case study approach; focusing on the narrating efforts of one child, she argues that his use of intra-conversational narrating largely derives from his own attempts to achieve successful interactions with other people. She documents the social resources one child uses as part of his communicative strategies.

We all narrate. Perhaps we truly are *homo narrans.* As this issue of *Children's Folklore Review* reflects, narrating, as a fundamental aspect of human to human communication, is learned and utilized at a young age.

"Curiouser and Curiouser!": Narration and Mimicry in Literature About Children and for Children

Priscilla A. Ord

Children are the natural bearers and practioners of many forms of folklore that are, regretably, lost or forgotten by all but a select few before they become adults. Among these forms of folklore are the art of unaffected storytelling or narration and naive participation in imaginative play or mimicry. Children, in general, have a propensity to recount or reenact events in which they or others have participated or to narrate, renarrate, or act out stories that they have heard, read, or had read to them. It should, then, follow that child characters in literature about children and for children share this unique ability.

In a 1988 article published in the *La Trobe Working Papers in Linguistics,* Gillian Wigglesworth states:

> The ability to relate a coherent, structured narrative demands considerable linguistic and cognitive skill. The information must be organized into a whole, participants must be named and differentiated, and linguistic referents must be established for future anaphoric reference. (167)

She continues:

> Two recent studies illustrate the way. . . different approaches can influence results. Bennett-Kastor (1983) suggested that children as young as two could introduce a noun phrase into a story and use it to maintain cohesion throughout successive clauses, while Karmiloff-Smith (1981, 1983, and 1985) claimed that it was not until around the age of seven that children were able to organize sentences into a cohesive narrative unit. To account for this difference it is necessary to examine the nature of the task required of children. In the first instance, where the children are simply asked to tell a story, they either retell a known tale or invent a story. Here, they may rely on memory of previous hearings to structure their story, or in the case of invented stories, on internal mental representations of which they, as both creator and narrator of the story, have control. In the second case, the children were being asked to tell a story from a specific set of picture prompts, demanding greater organizational skills on the part of the child who was required to set up linguistic referents from extralinguistic sources and maintain clear reference to them throughout the length of the narrative. Thus, not only is the child required to

> continually process the new information presented in each picture, but s/he must at the same time organize the information in a structured way. (168)

Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932), best known to most of us for *The Wind in the Willows,* liked to act out certain Victorian romances as a child. He, therefore, frequently depicted imaginative play-based on real life, historical data, or literary figures of several periods-in his early works about childhood. In *The Golden Age* (1895), in a chapter entitled "Sawdust and Sin," he presents a good example of the typical difficulties children encounter in narration, albeit in a book *about* childhood intended *for* adults.

Charlotte has prepared a tea party for her dolls, a form of mimicry itself, and then begins to tell them about Alice, her adventures in Wonderland, the White Rabbit, and the Queen's garden party. Her monologue is full of the false starts, stops, insertions, and corrections that can be expected in many children's narrations.

> "Now, I'm going to begin where I left off," said Charlotte, . . . "and you must pay attention, 'cos this is a treat to have a story before you're put to bed. Well, so the White Rabbit scuttled off down the passage and Alice hoped he'd come back 'cos he had a waistcoat on and her flamingo flew up a tree--but we haven't got to that part yet, you must wait a minute, and--where had I got to?"

> "Now we'll go on," began Charlotte once more. "So she got into the garden at last--I've left out a lot but you won't care, I'll tell you some other time--and they were all playing croquet, and that's where the flamingo comes in, and the Queen shouted out, 'Off with her head! '"

Her story is interrupted as one of the dolls suddenly doubles over, face down.

> '1f you'd been in the garden," went on Charlotte reproachfully "and flopped down like that when the Queen said 'Off with his head!' she'd have offed with your head; but Alice wasn't that sort of girl at all. She just said, 'I'm not afraid of you, you're nothing but a pack of cards.' --0 dear! I've got to the end already, and I hadn't begun hardly! I never can make my stories last out! Never mind, I'll tell you another one." (Grahame, *The Golden Age* 46-48)

One would think that there would be more, similar literary examples, in the context of the stories in which they appear, of children who retell or narrate stories from the literature that they have read, or have had read to them, but

such is not necessarily the case. Many who were asked for such examples mentioned only Tom Sawyer's use of information from the books that he had probably read in school in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) by Mark Twain. It should be noted, however, that Tom's apparent inability to make his "followers," including the unwitting Huck, understand portions of *The Count of Monte Cristo, Don Quixote,* tales of the Arabian Nights, and several other works of literature stems from his imperfect understanding or comprehension of the literature itself.

Narration, however, is not the only measure of a child's memory or understanding of specific stories, events, or concepts. Actions are said to speak louder than words, and a child's ability to act out stories or participate in imaginative play or mimicry also attests to a certain degree of understanding of the story, event, or concept(s) that are involved. Mimicry is, according to Caillois in *Man, Play, and Games,* one of the four divisions of play, depending on whether the role of competition (agôn), chance (alea), simulation (mimicry), or vertigo (ilinx) is dominant With mimicry, "the subject makes believe or makes others believe that he is someone [or some thing] other than himself. He forgets, disguises, or temporarily sheds his personality in order to feign another" (19). Caillois notes that "[t]he pleasure lies in being or passing as another" (21). Let us look at some examples of mimicry from children's literature--that is, literature about as well as for children.

In her well-known *Little Women* (1868), Louisa May Alcott's (1832-1888) March sisters played Pilgrim's Progress when they were younger. In the first chapter, "Playing Pilgrims," their mother asks:

> "Do you remember how you used to play Pilgrim's Progress when you were little things? Nothing delighted you more than to have me tie my piece bags on your backs for burdens, give you hats and sticks and rolls of paper, and let you travel through the house from the cellar, which was the City of Destruction, up, up, to the housetop, where you had all the lovely things you could collect to make a Celestial City." (13)

One of the earliest and most inventive examples of a form of mimicry is found in "The Town in the Library" (ca. 1899), written by the well-known children's author E[dith] Nesbit [Bland] (1858-1924). Rosamund and Fabian the third and fourth of the five Bland children in real life--are left to their own devices in the family library for a few hours on the day before Christmas. Their mother suggests that they play with their bricks or make pictures with their picture blocks, but she also admonishes them not to "touch the two top-drawers of the bureau" (134). Naturally, the two children immediately try to find a means to open the forbidden drawers without *touching*

them. Accomplishing this with the aid of the fireplace poker and tongs, even though "The front of the bureau got a little scratched" (Nesbit 136), they discover, but later wish they bad not, that the drawers contain their Christmas presents-lead soldiers, a doll and wicker work cradle, a donkey on a wheeled platform, some brass cannons, a bag of marbles, some flags, and a mouse that seemed to move by clockwork. After replacing these items carefully and closing the drawers to the bureau, the two children decide to build themselves a castle.

> Then they began to build. They had . . . two boxes of bricks--the wooden bricks with the pillars and the coloured glass windows, and the rational bricks which are made of clay like tiles. When all the bricks were used up they got the pretty picture blocks that kind Uncle Thomas gave them, and they built with these; but one box of blocks does not go far.
>
> …
>
> But the best of a library is the books. Rosamund and Fabian made up with books. They got Shakespeare in fourteen volumes, and Rollin's *Ancient History* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall,*and *The Beauties of Literature* in fifty-six fat little volumes, and they built not only a castle, but a town--and a big town--that presently towered high above them on the top of the bureau.
>
> …
>
> "It's almost big enough to get into," said Fabian, "if we had some steps." So they made steps with the *British Essayists,* the *Spectator* and the *Rambler,* and the *Observer,* and the *Tatler;* and when the steps were done they walked up them.
>
> …
>
> Rosamund and Fabian simply walked up the steps into the town they had built. (139-40)

While they are in their town, the company of blue soldiers from the bureau drawer comes to life and lays siege to the town. The children are only able to appease them with the raisins, figs, and candied fruit that they find in the second drawer of the bureau. To save themselves, they ultimately must set the company of red soldiers, the donkey, and the wind-up mouse against the blue soldiers and flee from their carefully constructed city. This idea of entering a city or town of one's own making persisted and ultimately formed the basis for Mrs. Bland's *The Magic City* (1910) nearly a dozen years later.

In compiling a list of further examples of this sort of mimicry, it is curious to see that these and additional examples from immediate recollection were

found in books that were written during or about the Victorian era, either in England or America, or by authors who had been children at that time. Ira Bruce Nadel states in "'The Mansion of Bliss' or the Place of Play in Victorian Life and Literature," *Children's Literature* (1982), that "The Victorian novel is a remarkable register of the kinds of play permitted in Victorian homes, as well as of the significance and influence of play on the moral and social life of the time" (24). The same is equally true of Victorian children's literature--literature that has been written for children by authors who were children during that era, or the works of modern authors who have researched this period carefully and have consciously placed their stories in Victorian times.

During the Victorian and Edwardian eras, adult attitudes toward play and the leisure pursuits of children changed significantly. Unproductive play and idle amusements were considered to be frivolous; but structured, often competitive, play and games were recognized and sanctioned for their intellectual, educational, and even physical benefits to the child. Nadel's article and similar social histories provide interesting, rather accurate views of the evolution of play and children's pursuits during this epoch.

In an attempt to justify its existence, much of what had been random play became organized, competitive games and sports. Idle diversions, such as shooting marbles or skipping rope, took on sets of rules and specific names so that marble shooting or rope skipping became a means to an end.

The Victorian concern for competition and rules was matched by an equally forceful belief in the benefits of using one's imagination and expressing one's creativity. Imaginative play took several forms, including reenactments of incidents from literature, history, or everyday life. This form of play could be accomplished alone or with others and without "props" or with dolls, realistic miniature figures and settings, or anyone of a number of theatrical toys.

A considerable amount of play, it seems, had to be as realistic and as detailed as possible. The Victorian doll house is an example of this general tendency, as are miniature replicas of people--particularly dolls and toy soldiers--places, and things, and mechanical and wind-up toys.

There are numerous examples of these realistic, detailed miniatures in children's books of the Victorian era. Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) set her delightful story *The Tale o/Two Bad Mice* (1904) in one of these doll houses; Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) played with his leaden soldiers on his counterpane ("The Land of Counterpane" 18) and buried one in the lawn of his grandfather Balfour's garden ("The Dumb Soldier" 87); and Margery Williams [Bianco] (1881-1944) "peopled" her nursery in *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922) with, among other things, a clockwork mouse, a jointed, wooden lion, and various mechanical toys.

> The mechanical toys were very superior, and looked down upon every one else; they were full of modem ideas and pretended they were real. (Williams 15)

With the time and effort that went into making these toys seem as realistic as possible, who could blame *them* if they thought they were real? *The Velveteen Rabbit* also provides yet another example of a child's participation in mimicry.

> Near the house where they lived there was a wood, and in the long June evenings the Boy liked to go there after tea to play. He took the Velveteen Rabbit with him, and before he wandered off to pick flowers, or play at brigands among the trees, he always made the Rabbit a little nest somewhere among the bracken, where he would be quite cosy, for he was a kindhearted little boy and he liked Bunny to be comfortable. (25)

In an early chapter of Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age*, entitled "A Holiday," Grahame's brother Harold amuses himself in solitary, imaginary play as a muffin man.

> It was a strange craze, certainly, but Harold, who invented his own games and played them without assistance, always stuck staunchly to a new fad, till he had worn it quite out. Just at present he was a muffin-man, and day and night he went through passages and up and down staircases, ringing a noiseless bell and offering phantom muffins to invisible wayfarers. (15)

While Harold played out his role as a muffin man, their brother Edward had taken on the persona of a bear.

> "And Edward, where is he?" I questioned again.
>
> "He'll be coming along the road," said Charlotte. "He'll be crouching in the ditch when we get there, and he's going to be a grizzly bear and spring out on us, only you mustn't say I told you so, 'cos it's to be a surprise."
>
> "All right," I said magnanimously. "Come on and let's be surprised." But I could not help feeling that on this day of days even a grizzly felt misplaced and common.
>
> Sure enough an undeniable bear sprang out on us as we dropped into the road; then ensued shrieks, growlings, revolver-shots, and unrecorded heroisms, till Edward condescended at last to roll over and die, bulking large and grim, an unmitigated grizzly. It was an

> understood thing, that whoever took upon himself to be a bear must eventually die, sooner or later, even if he were the eldest born; else, life would have been all strife and carnage, and the Age of Acorns have displaced our hard-won civilization. This little affair concluded with satisfaction to all parties concerned, we rambled along the road, picking up the defaulting Harold by the way, muffinless now and in his right and social mind. (15-16)

In a later chapter, "Alarums and Excursions," Harold suggests that the others join him at playing Cavaliers and Roundbeads, probably familiar to them from a history lesson. This idea is soundly rejected, so he proposes that they play at being Knights of the Round Table. After a predictable argument over who will take the various roles, the description of their group effort would have made Malory proud.

In *The Wind in the Willows,* it is the field mice, the "children" of the story, if you will, who are involved in playacting. It is Christmas Eve, and following an evening of caroling, they arrive at Mole End last of all as is their custom. After they sing a carol and have been invited in for refreshments as usual, Mole says to Rat. in the way of further introduction,

> They play act too, these follows. . . . Make them up all by themselves, and act them afterward. And very well they do it too! They gave us a capital one last year, about a field-mouse who was captured at sea by a Barbary corsair, and made to row in a galley; and when he escaped and got home again, his lady-love had gone into a convent.(94)

Most people have thought that A. A. Milne (1882-1956) wrote "about his son, Christopher Robin, who was six when *Winnie-the-Pooh* appeared in 1926, and about his son's toys," but it now appears that he "drew on the adventures [that] he and his brother Ken shared" when they were children (Lurie 11). They were obviously quite interested in, and Milne, no doubt, remembered many facts about, the several Arctic expeditions that occurred during their childhood, particularly those of Peary in 1891-92 and 1893-95.

In *Winnie-the-Pooh,* Milne depicts either his and his brother's or his son's comments and imaginative play, based on a child's understanding, or misunderstanding, of these events in a chapter entitled "Expotition to the North Pole." He accurately portrays the childlike confusion concerning the pronunciation and the meaning of an unfamiliar word in an exchange between Christopher Robin and Pooh.

> "We are all going on a Expedition," said Christopher Robin, as soon as he got up and brushed himself. "Thank you Pooh."
> "Going on an Expotition?" said Pooh eagerly. '1 don't think I've

> ever been on one of those. Where are we going on this Expotition?"
> "Expedition, silly old Bear. It's got an 'x' in it."
> "Oh!" said Pooh. "I know." But he didn't really.
> "What *is* the North Pole?" [Pooh] asked.
> "It's just a thing you discover," said Christopher Robin carelessly, not being quite sure himself.
> "Oh! I see," said Pooh. "Are bears any good at discovering it?"
> "Of course they are. And Rabbit and Kanga and all of you. It's an Expedition. That's what an Expedition means. A long line of everybody." (112-13)

Later, when Pooh picks up a long stick to assist in the rescue of Baby Roo who has been swept away by the stream in which he was washing himself, Christopher Robin asks,

> "Pooh," he said, "where did you find that pole?"
> Pooh looked at the pole in his hands.
> "I just found it," he said. "I thought it ought to be useful. I just picked it up."
> "Pooh," said Christopher Robin solemnly, "the Expedition is over. You have found the North Pole!" (125-27)

With *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), Arthur Ransome (1884-1967), at forty-six, already the author of more than twenty books, created what is considered a "new age" in children's literature. He too, however, was familiar with the imaginative play of his childhood as well as that of the children whom he knew and about whom he wrote. The very first page ably underscores the tendency of the child to persist in his imaginary world, even when conventional behavior would be more practical.

> Roger, aged seven and no longer the youngest of the family, ran in wide zigzags, to and fro, across the steep field that sloped up from the lake to Holly Howe, the farm where they were staying for part of the summer holidays. He ran until he nearly reached the hedge by the foot path, then turned and ran until he nearly reached the hedge on the other side of the field. Then he turned and crossed the field again. Each crossing of the field brought him nearer to the farm. The wind was against him, and he was tacking up against it to the farm, where at the gate his patient mother was awaiting him. He could not run straight against the wind because he was a sailing vessel, a tea-clipper, the *Cutty Sark.* His elder brother John had said only that morning that steamships were just engines in tin boxes. Sail was the thing, and so, though it took rather longer, Roger made his way up in the field in broad tacks.

> When he came near his mother, he saw that she had in her hand a red envelope and a small piece of white paper, a telegram. He knew at once what it was. For a moment he was tempted to run straight to her. He knew that telegrams came only from his father, and this one must be the answer. . .. But sail was the thing, not steam, so he tacked on, heading, perhaps, a little closer to the wind. At last he headed straight into the wind, moved slower and slower, came to a stop at his mother's side, began to move backwards, and presently brought up with a little jerk, anchored, and [was] in harbour.
>
> "Is it the answer?" he panted, out of breath after all that beating up against the wind. "Does he say Yes?" (13-14)

In looking at the examples that have been presented, focusing on the Victorian child, one might ask if the same sort of presentation might be made for more modem children. To date, however, few come to mind. The explanation for this might be a result of the experiences of current children compared to those of the Victorians.

We tend to think of Victorians as straight-laced and strict, and their children were to be seen and not heard in adult company. Attitudes toward childhood, however, were in a period of transition as a result of the concept of the kindergarten. Developed in Germany by Frederick Froeber and established in England in the mid-1850's by Johannes and Berthe Ronges-neighbors of Charles Dickens, whose fictional children could have benefited from such an environment-the kindergarten originally consisted of two rooms: one for games and the other, adjoining a garden or other outdoor play area, for exercise. The Victorian child's day was regimented, and there were specific times for structured play, education, and educational play, but there were also times for explorative walks and unstructured play, inside and outdoors in the fresh air. Imaginative play, both indoors and out, was strongly encouraged.

Today, the emphasis appears to have shifted again. Modem children are supposedly brought up in a considerably more permissive atmosphere but are, paradoxically, subject to more structure than one might recognize at first glance. Both lessons and play are *quite* structured. At school most children are expected to progress, but only with their classmates, neither excelling nor falling behind by much. Worksheets and work- and coloring books, the mainstay of modern classwork and homework, tend to stifle both imagination and creativity. Even recess is organized, structured, and competitive, and sports, predominantly team sports, and pastimes are highly organized. Schools allow less and less free time for solitary or individual exploration, and "free" time at home is consumed by watching television, participating in Nintendo-type games, and playing with mass produced toys.

There is hope, however, that the pendulum is beginning to swing the opposite direction, in an ever-increasing wave of nostalgia for "lost childhood." This is evident in a number of books that depict children from an earlier era as they participate in play of their own design or show children involved in imaginative play.

Alice McLerran (1933-) paid homage to an imaginary town that had been created by her mother and her mother's childhood playmates. She "reconstructed" it in a picture book, *Roxaboxen* (1991), with the aid of a manuscript her mother wrote in childhood, memories of relatives, and letters and maps from the town's former "citizens." "On a hill on the southeast comer of Second Avenue and Eighth Street, in Yuma, Arizona, there is a place once known as Roxaboxen" (endnotes).

> Marian called it Roxaboxen.
> (She always knew the name of everything.)
> There across the road, it looked like any rocky hill--
> nothing but sand and rocks, and some old wooden boxes,
> cactus and greasewood and thorny ocotillo--
> but it was a special place.
>
> …
>
> A town of Roxaboxen began to grow, traced in lines of stone:
> Main Street first, edged with the whitest ones,
> and then the houses.
> Charles made his of the biggest stones.
> After all, he was the oldest.
> At first the houses were very plain, but soon they all began to
> add more rooms.
> The old wooden boxes could be shelves or tables or anything
> you wanted.
> You could find pieces of pottery for dishes. Round pieces
> were best.
>
> …
>
> After a while they added other streets.
> Frances moved to one of them and built herself a new
> house
> outlined in desert glass,
> bits of amber, amethyst, and sea-green:
> a house of jewels.
>
> …
>
> More than fifty years later, Frances went back and Roxaboxen
> was still there.
> She could see the white stones bordering Main Street, and there
> where she had built her house the desert glass still glowed--
> amethyst, amber, and sea-green. (McLerran n.p.)

The illustrator for this marvelous book, Caldecott medalist Barbara Cooney, found recreating this world to be one of her most difficult assignments. She
actually traveled to Yuma where she found "a small tan hill dotted with stones and rocks, and scattering of desert plants, and not lots of broken glass and an old car chassis." Later, "accompanied by Alice McLerran's eighty-year-old Aunt Frances, [a] former Roxaboxenite, the magic and spirit of Roxaboxen began to emerge-a magic found in the minds and hearts of the children who played there" (McLerran endnotes).

In *The Indian in the Cupboard* (1980) by Lynne Reid Banks (1929-), two boys play with miniature figures of both humans and animals. Here the play is directed more by what the boys have learned from their history lessons than from literature, and, ironically, only the mass-produced, molded plastic figures come to life after they are placed in a castoff, metal, bathroom cabinet.

The preceding is obviously a report of work in progress. There is a growing body of work being published by both linguists and those involved in various forms of literary criticism that focuses on storytelling or narratives produced by children in all types of literature. These do not, however, seek out examples of children retelling or referring to a story that exists as a work of literature itself. More examples of this sort of narration, as well as descriptions of similar mimicry, need to be sought in literature both for adults and about and for children. Then one needs to look at them carefully for patterns in their use and the structure of the narratives and the examples of mimicry.

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Learning the Structure of Traditional Narrative

C. W. Sullivan III

> Sir Isiah Berlin once noted that critics are like hedgehogs or they are like foxes. Like foxes they can be very clever, knowing many things, tricking and troubling us in many clever ways with a seemingly infinite fund of intelligence that never fails to come up with something new and delightfully incisive. Or, like hedgehogs, they can know a single thing which they repeat over and over and over. It may well be a very important thing that they know. But it is that and that alone which makes them worth reading. (Delany 7)

Though I prefer to try to be (and think of myself as) a critical fox, I am here today as a hedgehog, worrying again a topic which I have addressed before-although in a literary rather than a folkloric guise-the topic of when and how and where children learn narrative structure. My earlier venture, "Narrative Expectations: The Folklore Connection," was an attempt to explain how young readers' knowledge of traditional narrative structure underlies their expectations of literary narrative. This time, I wish to discuss the concept that we all learn narrative structure, the existence of which we from then on take for granted, initially if not primarily through our experiences as active and passive bearers of folklore.

Most critics, if not all critics, assume-or perhaps have faith in-the existence of narrative as *a priori* to their analytical work. Structuralists see text as the sum of its component parts, and deconstructionists see it as the parts of its component sum. New historians see it as a product of the culture transmitted through the author, and biographical critics see it as a product of the author transmitted through the culture. New critics see it (or saw it, as they are severely out of fashion at the moment) as a thing in and of itself. And then there are the post-modernists who, I thought when I first heard the term, see it as existing somewhere in the future beyond the work of the modernists. None of them, however, asks where it comes from, and all of them seem to be getting farther and farther away from it anyway.

C.S. Lewis warned us about this some time ago in a quotation that this particular hedgehog returns to again and again:

> Those forms of literature in which the Story exists merely as a means to something else-for example, the novel of manners where the story is there for the sake of the characters, or the criticism of social conditions-have had full justice done to them; but those forms in which everything else is there for the sake of the story have been given little serious attention. (3)

Lewis 'points in a direction in which mythology-in-literature scholar John Vickery continues when he argues that most mythology-in-literature critics would agree that "myth forms the matrix out of which literature emerges both historically and psychologically" (ix). That is, the Story came first, even though all of the uses to which it has been put and all of the critical means by which it has been interpreted have overshadowed it of late. But none of this tells anything about who told the first story or why that story was told.

The fact that we are not born knowing narrative structure was brought home to me several years ago by my friend, children's literature author and critic, Peter Hunt, during a talk he presented at the 1987 Children's Literature Association Conference in Ottawa. His main argument was that we know very little about how children read until they read as adults do, and he provided, among others, this example from his own experience. He was reading Shirley Hughes' *Up and Up* to his daughter, and one of the pages was divided vertically into three tall panels. The first panel depicted a small girl holding a bunch of helium balloons, the second showed the girl being lifted off the ground by the balloons, and the third showed the balloons being burst by an overhanging branch. After studying the page, Felicity pointed to the second panel and commented, *"Those* balloons have not popped" (38). Where the adult reader saw a continuum of events happening chronologically from left to right to the same person, the child saw discrete elements depicting the situations of three different and separate individuals. Moreover, most adults in Hunt's position would have misinterpreted Felicity's reading as a mistake rather than what it actually was--an alternate interpretation of an available text. She had not yet *learned* that one is supposed to read pictures, in certain situations, from left to right as one reads words (at least in our Euro-American culture).

When it comes to how and when traditional narrative is learned, as opposed to how and when reading the printed text is learned (a process which may, in fact, be significantly easier for the child who knows traditional narrative), we may be equally ill-informed, taking for granted that anything which does not fit the adults' patterns is a mistake. As folklorists, we recognize informal learning as the way in which traditional

materials are passed from generation to generation, and when we discuss this with our students we often pick concrete (and sometimes sexist) examples, citing the mother teaching her daughter how to make a quilt, the father teaching his son how to carve a duck decoy, or the group barn raising in which one's increasing age brings an increased level of participation in the central elements of the event. More abstract learning processes have yet to be examined, left, perhaps, as understood to be *like* the obvious ones just mentioned. Such is the case with children and learning the structure of traditional narrative.

Children are not, as Peter Hunt's example amply illustrates, genetically Aristotelian, they have not read Propp (even in translation), nor can they have yet heard of the nineteenth-century well-made novel. But an examination of children's initial, informal narrative experiences, both active and passive, suggests that they develop early a sense of the traditional narrative which then guides their tale telling (and, to some extent, their reading) experiences into adolescence and, perhaps, beyond-a sense of the structure of traditional narrative which might well be recognized by Aristotle, Propp, and the nineteenth-century theorists.

Children's earliest experiences with traditional narrative are as listeners-not tellers. As they are being fed, changed, rocked, or entertained, they often hear traditional narratives. "This Little Piggy" describes the everyday activities of the five pigs represented by the baby's toes, and "Patty Cake, Patty Cake" tells a brief tale about food preparation. Even the "Alphabet Song," although it does not tell a story as such, does have a definite and non-interchangeable beginning-middle-end structure.

As the child passes out of babyhood and leaves those initial narratives behind, he or she will be presented with other traditionally-structured narratives of increased length. The familiar nursery rhymes-"Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Jack and Jill," "There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe," "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater," "Humpty Dumpty," and the rest all have strong story lines and, though contained in numerous books, are often passed on orally by adults who remember having heard them as children. And once the child has heard the rhyme a few times, the parent who changes or makes an error in the recitation (or skips a page in the book) will be quickly corrected. These corrections suggest, at least, that the child is becoming aware that there is such a thing as a "whole" book or story to be read and a "proper" form for the rhyme; the child is becoming aware of the congruence between the content and the form.

The child's awareness of traditional narrative structure will be heavily reinforced by the folk and fairy tales which a parent may tell or read aloud and which the child will probably go on to read for himself or herself. Folk tales, like "Cinderella," or literary imitations of folk tales, like Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," adhere generally to the

Märchen structure or the Hero Tale structure delineated by Propp, Dégh, Campbell, Raglan and others and make the child listener or reader aware, at least inductively and certainly still informally, of the structure of traditional narrative.

This awareness of traditional narrative structure shows up in the folklore which children generate and transmit among themselves. In a way, however, it is unfortunate that very little of children's earliest attempts to tell jokes and stories has been collected and studied. Such studies, I believe, would show that children are generally aware of form earlier than they are aware of content-as adults recognize those concepts. Brian Sutton-Smith proves the theory, at least, in regard to riddles; in "A Developmental Structural Account of Riddles," he includes a category called "pre-riddles" which include exchanges that "would not generally be recognized as riddles" even though "they were couched in question and answer form and presented as if they constitute some sort of puzzle"
(114). A similar case has been made in regard to the conversations of very young children. In "Preschool Children's Intraconversational Narratives," D. Jean Umiker-Sebeok makes the very telling observation that three-year-olds' "conversations tend to consist of simple chains of conversational fragments which together do not make up what an adult would call a 'conversation'" (107).

Sutton-Smith's "pre-riddles" and Umiker-Sebeok's "conversational fragments" are the children's first recognizable attempts to tell riddles or engage in conversations. They do not have the content-the puzzle and solution of the "real riddle" (Sutton-Smith 115) or the "conjoint elaboration of a conversational topic" (Umiker-Sebeok 107)-but they are exhibiting sufficiently recognizable structures enabling children's folklorists to collect and classify the items if not analyze them. The form may be correct, but the content is not yet there. More needs to be done in collecting such items as "pre-riddles" and "conversational fragments" and then examining them in terms of both structure and content to see why and how they are not yet the fully developed riddles and conversations that older children produce.

The incomplete learning process reflected in the child's first attempt at telling a joke or making up a story may well be different from mistakes made when learning the alphabet or when learning to count. In the latter cases, there are approved texts which the child memorizes even if-as in the case of a child who learns the alphabet or numbers from Sesame Street before he or she understands what letters or numbers are-the child may not be aware of the meaning of those letters and numbers which he or she is reciting in the approved sequence or form. In both cases, the joke and the alphabet, the child may be making mistakes on the basis of content, or

a lack of awareness thereof, but in the case of the alphabet, there is an approved text to retreat to for guidance. With the joke, however, there is no approved text as such; the joke is a higher-context recitation than the alphabet. In other words, one must *know* what is funny before one can tell a joke; it is a process of enculturation, and as a person grows up in a culture group, he or she also grows into the culture group and operates on an increasingly high-context level so that we all know what is funny.

The mistakes a child makes in some other learning situations may be more instructive. When a child innocently but seriously sings "Gladly the cross-eyed bear" or some other humorous variation of a traditional religious or patriotic song, he or she is filling up the proper form with words that make immediate sense from his or her own range of experiences. The child is happily singing the form, as rhythmically and tonally as possible, in that famous Christmas carol, "Round John Virgin," but has substituted "John" for "yon" because the former is part of his or her working lexicon while the latter is not. In addition, the elision of "Round yon" when the carol is sung makes it sound very like "Round John" and could be a contributing factor in the "error." Similarly, when a child says, "Why did the dog cross the road?" and answers "To bark," there is a well known joke form being followed even if the content here is not humorous to the adult listener. As with the song "mistakes," the form is being followed faithfully, but the content is awry.

When children do become proficient in relating narratives, they create and transmit an amazing amount of material. As studies like the Opies' *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959), the Knapps' *One Potato, Two Potato* (1976), and Bronner's *American Children's Folklore* (1988) document, children have an extensive repertoire of traditional narratives, from legends and ghost stories to jokes and personal-experience narratives, which are passed on among children whenever they get together. But structured narratives appear elsewhere in children's folklore as well. Many jump-rope rhymes tell stories about sibling rivalry, love and marriage, illness and accident, and the like. Teasing rhymes, game rhymes, counting-out rhymes, and topical rhymes also have strong narrative lines. And parody rhymes and songs generally preserve the narrative lines of the originals on which they are based. All of these materials have, at one time or another, been successfully analyzed according to their traditional narrative structures.

The prevalence of traditionally-structured narratives created and circulated among children on one hand accounts for and on the other is reinforced by their early adolescent reading experiences. Certainly those readers who made series books like the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, Nancy Drew, Cherry Ames, and the others popular were

responding to the strong plot lines as well as to the interesting characters or the desire for imagined adventure. One of the most identifiable characteristics of the series novel is its formulaic structure-sufficiently formulaic that it does not matter that the Tom Swift books or the Hardy Boys books were written by a stable of authors and not by "Victor Appleton" or "F.W. Dixon." More recently, formulaic romance novels have invaded the young adult market. Novels published in the "First Love," "Sweet Dreams," or "Silhouette" series have the same strong formulaic plot lines as the romances written for the adult market. A similar case, of course, could be made for series television and series feature films.

By the time children reach that transitional point where they are becoming teenagers or young adults (in attitude if not in years), they are already well-educated in narrative structure. They know what a text is supposed to be and do; and that knowledge can last a lifetime. The college undergraduate who approached me after we had finished Pirandello's wonderfully ambiguous drama, *Right You Are (If You Think You Are),* and asked me who the woman *really* was, the main character's first or second wife (the play does not answer that crucial question), was operating according to traditional narrative guidelines. She, the student, knew that the ending was supposed to resolve the confusion, felt that she must have missed or misunderstood that resolution, and expected me, as (archetypal) teacher, to know *the* answer.

Once again, I can not answer, in its entirety, the question I posed at the beginning of this talk. Like the astrophysicists who say they will never be able to know what was there before the Big Bang that created our expanding universe, I do not know where narrative comes from or exactly how and when it achieved the form in which it has been passed down to us. But it has been passed down to us, and we are still passing it on. I believe that what I have just said may explain a lot about when, where, and how children in our society learn what we, as adults and critics, take for granted as traditional narrative structure; and I also believe that not only collecting but focusing on the mistakes children make when they first begin to relate narratives largely of their own creation, jokes or stories, might help us further understand the process of narrative acquisition even if we may never fully know what was there before and how what we now have came about.

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"Text, Lies and Videotape": Can Oral Tales Survive?

Elizabeth Tucker

Within the past ten years, the home video machine has become a major vehicle for children's storytelling. In relatively affluent households it is common for children to watch tapes such as "Cinderella," "Peter Pan," "Sleeping Beauty," and "The Little Mermaid" over and over again. Is it true that, as some studies have suggested, substantial TV-watching inhibits creativity? (Waters). And is it possible that some of our treasured traditional tale texts will die out, to be replaced in the minds of children by video versions? I want to explore these ideas, which may be at best half-truths, in light of children's folklore scholarship and my own recent fieldwork. Stories collected from children indicate that there is a great deal of creativity to be found, including creative elaborations of the story videos that are becoming so well known by young viewers.

Since 1976, when Sylvia Grider coined the term "media narraform" in her dissertation, *The Supernatural Narratives of Children,* some scholarly attention has been given to media-based storytelling. My own dissertation, *Tradition and Creativity in the Storytelling of Pre-Adolescent Girls* (1977), includes a chapter on "TV stories." In Brian Sutton-Smith's *The Folkstories of Children* (1981), there are narratives in which media influence is apparent. John Niles's "Storytelling by the Very Young" (1980) is about stories told by children from the age group four to six, based on tales that have circulated orally, in print, and on video: "Cinderalla," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Snow White." These delightful stories demonstrate considerable creativity, as well as some blending of traditional folktale structures.

My field research in 1990-1991 has, like Niles's study, focused on children between the ages of four and six: children who are not only at a crucial stage of storytelling development but also at a key "video age"-to coin an adaptation of Bühler and Bilz's term "Märchen age." I collected stories from three groups of children in a campus pre-school, asking each group what they knew about "Cinderella" and "The Little Mermaid." The almost invariable answer to my questions about both tales was, "I know it! I've got a tape of it!" In all three groups the children helped each other to remember details of the familiar tapes. None of them used anything but video versions as starting-points for narrations; to this extent, I can assert that videotape is overshadowing traditional print versions of stories. This does not mean, however, that the original story structures are gone or that narrative creativity is waning.

In my fieldwork with pre-school children, I have been fascinated to discover how heavily the narrative process is influenced by VCRs as well as videotapes. Children get used to starting, stopping, and replaying the stories that they watch at home on their VCRs; even two-year-olds can be quite good at learning to push the right buttons. As they become accustomed to having this kind of control, young viewers may try to extend it to stories that are not on TV. I first noticed this phenomenon when my son Peter, then three years old, was asking me to tell him a story. I told him I didn't have time to think of one, and he answered, "Oh, just wind yourself back and tell me my favorite story again." Having never thought of myself as a living VCR before, I was intrigued by this request. As our society becomes increasingly dependent on technology, with computer terminals and TV screens in homes, schools, and workplaces, it is natural for people to use mechanical metaphors when referring to themselves and other individuals. One article that investigates this impact of machines upon humans is Robbie Davis-Floyd's "The Technological Model of Birth." As we learn more about how children are affected by technology, we should be able to draw some significant conclusions with regard to folk narrative.

At this point, my research on children's VCR-oriented behavior is just beginning. I can, however, offer one vignette of children telling stories like VCRs that I observed last summer. Two five year-olds and a six-year-old were swapping ghost stories, and one of them had to leave to go to the bathroom. Their dialogue was as follows:

> DAVID: There was a ghost at our school. It used to be an old factory. Very, very spooky. She was dead. And she walked around. Can you guess how?--CLICK!--I have to go to the bathroom!
>
> TOMMY: Don't you mean "PAUSE"?
>
> (David goes to the bathroom)
>
> LAURA: Uh-oh! Time to reset the pause button!

Right after this technological adjustment, the three children went back to telling stories in the traditional, non-mechanized manner. Perhaps incorporating machine-like pauses and clicks into a narrative is becoming a new tradition for some child narrators.

Aside from the question of machine-like narrations, the issue of videotape dominance is interesting to explore. I chose to ask children about "Cinderella" and "The Little Mermaid" because the Disney versions of both stories have been sold to many thousands of families on videotape. (Other

cartoon versions of the stories had appeared before, but they achieved considerably less popularity.) Since "The Little Mermaid" came out in 1990 and "Cinderella" was released as a videotape in 1988, I wondered whether the more recent film would be more interesting to children as a subject for narration. Of course the Disney storybook version of "Cinderella" had been based on the movie, and its popularity reflected children's fondness for the film. "The Little Mermaid" was a wildly successful, brand-new Disney "classic" that might still hold the attention of young storytellers. In particular, I wanted to know how creative children could be in their tellings of the video favorites and what vestiges of versions other than videos existed in their narrations.

The last of these questions was the easiest to answer; all three groups of children in my fieldwork sample, ranging in age from four to six, told me that they had seen both tapes. Most of their families owned one or both of the videos. While it was possible that these families also owned Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" and Perrault's "Cinderalla," there was no evidence that texts other than the video narratives had made a strong impression on the children. Easily available and pleasing to the eye and ear, the video versions were clearly the winners.

In this paper I have chosen to focus on the narraforms told by four-year-olds, since the children in that age group proved to be especially lively and imaginative. Previously I had asked a group of three-year-olds to tell me what they knew about "Cinderella" and "The Little Mermaid," but their stories, while enthusiastically told, were garbled and sometimes incoherent. The five- and six-year-olds with whom I worked told relatively clear, careful renditions of the two tapes. The four-year-olds, however, were wild and free in their interpretations of the stories. This difference can be explained to some extent by the presence of several very imaginative, outgoing children in the four-year-old group, but it also demonstrates the process of socialization by which children gradually learn the importance of accuracy and clarity.

On the first day when I collected stories, almost all of the four-year-old said that they knew the story of Cinderella. Two children said that they had the tape but did not know how to tell the story. Then Emily, a self-confident and imaginative child, raised her hand and asked if she could tell about Cinderella "the *scary* way." When I told her that this would be fine, she began:

> Okay. Once upon a time a baby cat was born. And she was very small. And since her family was very poor, she decided to run away into a dark, dark woods. And he got lost into a dark, dark woods--and then he got lost again and he went--the moon went behind a cloud, and when it came out again, the little boy

> turn into a VAMPIRE! (screams)
> (One of the boys asked: "And what happened to Cinderella?")
> Well, Cinderella's the little boy, and now she's a *vampire.* And then the--the Cinderella-vampire smelled--saw a boy and a girl, and some other girls, and he swooped up in the sky saying, "I wonder which one I should eat first?" 'Then he swooped down and he ATE 'EM! Then he blew up.

My first reaction to Emily's story was that it was hardly a narraform of the Cinderella tape. Other than the fact that the baby cat was small, poor, and unhappy at home, there is little resemblance between the main character of this story and Cinderella. When I asked Emily later what kind of story this was, however, she reaffirmed that it was "the Cinderella tape-the scary way." Emily was very serious about the telling of her story; too young for parody, she was totally absorbed in putting together the right details to make her story interesting and scary. There was no conflict in her mind between the plot structure of "Cinderella" and the plot of a typical vampire movie, which seems to be the other model for narration here; she simply took what she wanted from both sources and put them together into her own story. While at least one child in the audience wanted to make sure that the name "Cinderella" was clearly mentioned, Emily knew what she wanted to do and had confidence in her own skills as a storyteller.

One noteworthy feature of Emily's story is its fluidity of form and reference, with both shape-shifting and gender-bending. The baby cat becomes a vampire; originally a "she," this kitten turns into a "he" about two thirds of the way through the story. Pronoun shifts are quite common in this age group, when children are just becoming accustomed to techniques of storytelling. The shifts are not just confusions, though; they seem to occur quite naturally, as in the unexplained changes of shape that happen in dreams. I remember Brian Sutton-Smith saying at a lecture in 1977 that children's stories and dreams are very closely related to each other; looking at such texts as Emily's story, I am reminded of the truth of that statement (cf. Sutton-Smith "The Expressive Profile"; Bühler and Bilz; Roheim; von Beit).

The last point I want to make about the "Cinderella vampire" story is that one must not overlook its connection to a narrative poem from oral tradition: the "Dark, dark . . . "rhyme (Leach 51; Opie 56; Tucker 483-4). When I was collecting material for my dissertation in 1976, many children told me all about the dark, dark box in the dark, dark closet in the dark, dark wood, and so on. Today, this is still an extremely popular narrative that is told most often around Halloween. The phrase "dark, dark woods" fits right into the Cinderella and vampire movie framework, demonstrating Sylvia Grider's point that "the media and oral tradition are complementary" *(The*

Supernatural Narratives of Children 419; cf. Grider "Media Narraform").

A different Cinderella story from my group of four-year-olds illustrates even better the fluidity with which various videotapes, books, and oral story elements can come together. While I cannot include the whole story text because of its length, I can include enough of a sample to demonstrate its richness of detail. This was a collaborative story-a format very common in the telling of narraforms, because of the complexity of details that must be remembered or, in some cases, thought up and added on. The two narrators of the story were Margaret and Emily (the same Emily who told "Cinderella Vampire"). As the two narrators got going, they gave their central character three different names: Cinderella, Tiger, and Cinderella Tiger. The last part of the story developed as follows:

> MARGARET: Cinderella was very mean to Tiger. So Tiger decided to save his life by running away, so he ran away.
>
> EMILY: So he ran away to this spooky, spooky house. But he didn't know it at first! He thought he had gone into this special place that's called the Hundred-Acre Wood where Winnie the Pooh lived! *Except* it was a haunted house he went to.
>
> MARGARET: Then he went into the house and, oh boy, was he foolish. He closed the door behind him and locked it.
>
> EMILY: Oh boy, it's my turn. Now as soon as he started he fell down dead, that's what. His house-he thought it was a very, very nice high step, this house of Pooh's. . .. And he went into the closet, but he met a ghost. Very scary. He met a monster and a turtle. He went, "Oh no, I have to get out of here!", so he got out, he went up the stairs. He met all these hundred things. First he met E.T. and then E.T. said, "E.T. phone home!" And he was so scared that he ran away, and he didn't come back. And then he said, "Oh no! I don't want to go anyplace else. I guess I'll have to go back to Cinderella!"

There is a lot more to this story, but this excerpt should be enough to show how much blending of story elements takes place within it. Winnie the Pooh and E.T., both familiar characters on home video screens, join Cinderella, Tiger, and Cinderella Tiger in pursuing a spooky adventure.

This blending of stories and characters reminds me of what happens in the stories told by four-year-old Rachel in John Niles's "Storytelling by the Very Young." In those stories Cinderella and Snow White are the two characters who shift plots and roles in a manner that may seem very funny to adults but is perfectly natural and matter-of-fact for young children. All

the plots and characters of familiar videotapes and other narratives provide raw material for creative storytelling, which narrators can put together any way they like for their own amusement and the entertainment of their audience. Certainly the focus in Emily's and Margaret's story is on spooky events, which are clear-cut enough in their traditional form to make many blendings of plots and characters possible.

After hearing these two versions of "Cinderella," one individual and the other collaborative, one might well ask what happened to such plot details as the fairy godmother's magic, the encounter with the handsome prince at the ball, and the discovery of the right girl to wear the glass slipper. I think the reason why the four-year-olds left out these important elements is that they already knew the Cinderella story well and did not find it interesting to tell it again in its original form. Unlike some older children, they did not feel an obligation to give the adult collector just what she asked for. Scary stories were especially exciting for them then (even though it was July, not October), and scary stories were what they ended up telling, to their own immense satisfaction.

When I asked this same group of children what they knew about "The Little Mermaid," they gave me a couple of versions that were much closer to the videotape's plot than their narrations of "Cinderella" had been. This difference can be explained by the relative newness of "The Little Mermaid," which most of the children had seen on the big screen before getting access to it on videotape. They were excited about the movie, enthusiastic about its music, and confused about some of the plot In comparison with "Cinderella," which was fairly simple to follow, this videotape offered some meaty issues for discussion. The children's first attempt at telling the story went like this:

> MAGGIE: Once upon a time there was a mermaid. She lived under the sea.
>
> PETER: I know the Sea Witch could eat a lot of things, and she growed bigger than the whole sea. And the little mermaid-and a man got stuck in the crown.
>
> PAUL: There was a Sea Witch. And the little mermaid came in with the two ugly things, and the two monsters, they came, and the dad got shot, and the mom was crying, and he had power. The sea witch had power. And he came back. And killed the witch.
>
> PETER: Uh-uh! He didn't kill the witch! The witch killed itself.

ET: And was that the end?

MARGARET: Yes. It's a very *long* story.

Unlike their "Cinderella" stories, this group's collaborative efforts to tell "The Little Mermaid" showed careful recollection and attention to detail. Not all the children agreed on what had happened; this was part of what made the story interesting. Telling the narraform gave them a chance to say what they thought was important and to learn other interpretations from their friends. As Margaret said at the end of their joint effort, "The Little Mermaid" is a "very *long* story." With such a barrage of action, dialogue, and music, it was no wonder that the narrators covered just a fraction of the plot in their rendition.

One portion of this narraform, Paul's description of the dad getting shot and the mom crying, might make us wonder whether the plot is being deliberately changed and extended. Neither in Andersen's nor in Disney's version is there a mother present, and there is no shooting with a gun either. Paul's phrasing makes the conflict sound like an incident of domestic violence in a two-parent home. I don't think this is a deliberate plot alteration, though. Paul seems to be interpreting the mm's action within a frame of reference that he knows well: parents interacting and expressing their feelings. Children are bound to find some things incomprehensible and to make some leaps of logic to put their own kind of meaning together.

In conclusion, I certainly wouldn't want to say, based on my small sample of narratives, that videotapes are taking over the world of children's storytelling. However, I do see evidence that today's children are significantly influenced by the story-tapes that they watch. When they control the progress of stories on their VCRs, children enjoy a sense of independence and power. On the other hand, when they playfully become VCRs themselves, they are acting out the prominence that, if carried far enough, can become frustrating and dehumanizing. While we should keep an eye on children's involvement with VCRs, we needn't be too concerned about creativity being wiped out by repeated viewing of stories on videotape. At present there seems to be a productive interdependence between the TV screen and that old-fashion storytelling device, the mouth. If the mouth can hold its own while ideas continue to proliferate, oral tales should continue to thrive well into the twenty-first century.

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"I Know a Story About That": One Young Child's Use and Understanding of Narrating

Judith Haut

This paper is a case study of one child's use of the narrative voice and a description of his growing social skills as a narrator. The child in question is my own son, Bryan; I am discussing and quoting him with his permission. He is now six years old; most of the data were gathered between the time he was four and a half and five and a half years old.[1]

For Bryan, as I suspect for many narrators, the impetus to narrate is social, a drive to communicate with other people. Experience and knowledge of plot structure and linguistic devices underlie Bryan's endeavors, but it is his motivation to engage with others that stimulates his selecting from among his narrating repertoire in ways that fit the immediate situation; therefore, this article sets forth not only the kinds of narratives he identifies and tells as stories, but also the specific contexts in which he elects to become a storyteller. This data, obtained from doing ethnographic research in a intimate, family setting, may add to the growing body of scholarly literature that addresses the *"artful* uses of oral language" (Bauman 9).

For well over a year, every time I asked Bryan to tell me a story, he responded in a significantly consistent way (with very few wording changes):

> Once there was a old, old man and he had some friends. And one friend decorated the house. And when his father came home he said, "Let's get a koala." So they searched and searched and searched 'til they found it. Then they brang it home. They kissed it, and they hugged it, and they loved it forever. The end.
> (Recorded February 1990 when Bryan was four.)

Bryan began telling this story when he was three and a half years old. My guess is that he thought that this story was the most appropriate response to the request, "Please tell me a story." He has told this story so consistently that our family refers to it as "Bryan's Koala Story." During this same period, Bryan engaged in many narrating activities; for example, he talked about exciting videos he had seen and described the events of the day. But if I specifically asked for a story, this is what I heard. He told me on one occasion, "I don't know any other stories to tell you" (age 4- 1/2). In fact, as recently as November 1991, when Bryan turned six, he was still using this plot when directly asked to tell

a story.[2]

Thinking back, I wonder what Bryan's conception of story was at the time. Why did he have such a standardized response to direct requests for a story, yet participate in other narrating activities? During the three years that I have been actively taping and interviewing him, Bryan seems to have expanded his notion of story or at least his sense of his own repertoire of stories. And from listening to Bryan's conversations with other children and with adults, I have begun to have a sense of how he regards story telling conversation. Bryan, like the adolescents in Amy Shuman's study, understands the difference between "the flow of conversation and a story" (Shuman 12). He makes use of a number of explicit devices to alert his audience that he is about to tell a story or to ensure a break in the give and take of conversation. "I know a story about that" is one of his most used opening markers (cf. Jefferson). When Bryan moves from conversation to narrating his breathing slows and the cadence of his voice changes. He is likewise adept at recognizing when someone else begins "to tell a story."

To be a narrator demands particular cognitive and linguistic abilities--such as the ability to sequence in a meaningful manner or to represent a character or an action not immediately present (Goodwin 230). In addition, to be a storyteller, to be a *good* storyteller, demands the ability to place a story topically in conversation and to understand the social interactional requirements of being a narrator (cf. Georges "Communicative Role").

That young children have the ability to tell stories is readily apparent from even our casual encounters with children; young children's narrating is well-documented in scholarly literature (e.g; Niles "Storytelling" and "Some Uses of Tradition"; Sutton-Smith; Chukovsky; Ames; Paley; Preece; Umiker-Sebeok). Although earlier research tended toward analyses of texts with little or no contextual information, some more recent research has begun to present children's narrating in order to answer questions related to cognitive and linguistic development (Botvin and Sutton-Smith; Ames; Kernan), psycho-sexual concerns (Wolfenstein; Zumwalt), or to promote mental health (Niles, "Some Uses of Tradition" 22). Ethnographic or performance-based studies of children's narrating are more difficult to find; some exceptions include Jones, Gilmore, Roemer, and Brady.

Inasmuch as storytelling is a fundamental human activity, it should come as no surprise that even very young children use stories to highlight or illuminate certain points, to manipulate conversations, to gain prestige, and to entertain one another. But from the published literature about children as narrators, it is difficult to assess the *social* uses children make

of narrating. Although some studies place pre-adolescent and adolescent narrators in social-interactional frameworks (e.g. Goodwin; Heath; Umiker-Sebeok; Watson-Gegeo and Boggs), interpretations of young children's narrating tend to focus on psychological or linguistic rather than social functions.

In part these kinds of data and resultant analyses exist because of the nature of the methods researchers use to elicit narratives and narrating. In a commonly used technique, the adult researcher--more often than not in a school setting--simply asks a child, "Tell me a story" (see, for example, Sutton-Smith; Pitcher and Prelinger; Applebee). As I discovered in my attempts to elicit a story from Bryan with a direct request, I was told a story. But use of this method leads only to an approximation of a child's narrating abilities and ignores the observation that narrating is a special aspect of conversational turn-taking (cf. Jefferson 220).

Why would a child choose to interject narrating in the midst of conversation? What familial and peer group experience might contribute to his or her viewing narrating as an appropriate mode of communication? What does a child narrator understand as the point of a story he or she tells?

By focusing on the narrating activities of one child, I hope to answer these and related questions. And by taking a case study or personal history approach (cf. Langness; Bauman; de Caro; Azadovskii), I hope to demonstrate that Bryan's growing abilities as a storyteller fit with his outgoing personality, his desire for attention, and his social experiences in and out of his home. As other folklorists have discovered, doing fieldwork within one's family can result in richly contextualized studies but also presents some personal difficulties (see, for example, Yocom; Sherman; Scheiberg).

Although some of my data come from planned observations and interviews with Bryan, most of the situational information actually comes from fortuitous fieldwork, happenstance. I simply try to pay attention when he decides the time is right to tell a story. As Robert A. Georges observes, "because folklorists study phenomena and behaviors that are so intricately interwoven into the fabric of everyday life, opportunities to gather data do not necessarily have to be created through preplanned fieldwork projects" ("Proverbial Speech" 39). In fact, several researchers have hypothesized that if children were able to narrate in a relaxed setting, their abilities would surpass that which has already been documented (Niles "Some Uses of Tradition" 20). For example, based on her observations and analyses of preschool children's intraconversational narratives, Jean Umiker-Sebeok writes:

> There were many striking differences between intraconversational narratives in child-child and child-adult exchanges in the classroom, chief of which was the greater length and complexity of those where an adult was the listener. . . . One might well expect that in more intimate surroundings, such as the child's own home, and with an audience with which he is more familiar and at ease, intraconversational narratives would be significantly more developed than those recorded in the present study. (106)

Although Bryan recognizes that it is sometimes easier to tell stories to adults than to other children, he also realizes that the role of the storyteller is a desirable social role, one not always easy to attain. One afternoon (January 30, 1991), I arrived at his school to take him home. He burst into tears as he saw me, crying, "I didn't get a chance to tell my stories." He went on to explain that several boys were sitting behind a big tree telling scary stories. He said, "They don't want to listen to my stories, just to each other. They don't want to listen to me." On another occasion he said that he tells longer stories to adults because "the other kids don't listen long enough." Even though it is easier to tell stories to adults, he wants to tell them to his friends.

Bryan is able to narrate structurally complex stories at home; however, long term familiarity with his audience does not seem to be an important factor in his decision to narrate. His most salient use of storytelling occurs when he is deeply engaged in conversation. It may be with someone he has known for a long time or even with someone he has just met. I will illustrate this in the following account.

When Bryan was three and a half years old, he began working very hard at making other children and adults notice him; these attempts did not always result in what I would consider socially appropriate behaviors, however. When he was about four, I noticed that his standard opening gambit with every new adult he chanced to meet was, "Bet you can't guess what my name is." If the person happened to know his name, he then asked, "Bet you can't guess how old I am."

But during a camping trip to Sequoia National Park a few months before his fifth birthday, I noticed a major change in his opening lines to strangers. Suddenly he was customizing his verbal approach. "What's your name?" he asked a woman. "Stephanie," she replied. "Oh, I go to school with a girl named Stephanie."

My husband and I had bought Bryan a camera for the trip. Bryan approached several people and initiated conversations by talking about photographic equipment. For example, he walked up to one man who was

gazing at the General Sherman tree and asked, "How many pictures do you get with your camera? I get 24 with with my camera." I infer that his new, customized opening lines were appropriate in that the adults continued to talk with him, often about the subject he had raised. This ability to address people in a topically appropriate manner seems similar to Umiker-Sebeok's findings from a large scale study of pre-schoolers' interconversational narrating that the stories of the four year olds were more integrated into conversations than those of three year olds.

On the last day of our vacation, we walked into a gift shop in Sequoia. Bryan walked over to a park ranger who was talking with the store manager. Bryan was extremely interested in the ranger's walkie talkie. "I've got a Star Trek communicator at home," Bryan told the ranger. In response, the ranger began to show Bryan the walkie talkie. The store manager responded by showing Bryan a picture of Captain Kirk "who was just in the store last week." She then showed Bryan an artificial cactus that was sitting on the counter. Bryan said, "I know a story about that":

> There was this lady and she had a cac-, she bought a cactus. And she put it in her living room. And in the night she slept, she came down to see it and it was moving. And in the morning she called 911 and the 911s came. She called the police and the police said, "Call 911." And she called 911 and the 911s came. And they put a big plastic sheet over it and, and, and then it blew up and all these tiny [pause] tiny tarantulas came walking out. And it's the end now. (Transcribed from tape recording made two weeks later.)[3]

The store manager responded to Bryan's narrating by saying that she knew the woman in the store where the cactus was sold. They continued to discuss the story. I infer that, at that moment, the store manager and the ranger were responding less to Bryan as a four year old and more as a narrator. And Bryan had learned that the role is an appropriate and meaningful way in which to communicate with other people, regardless of the difference in age.

The day before I had taped this version, I had asked Bryan what, if anything, he called this story. Without hesitation he answered, "I want to call it 'Cactus Arachnophobia'." When I started to laugh, he said, "Well that's what it's about." I feel certain that he was able to coin this title because in the weeks preceding this taping he had seemed very interested in the newspaper ads and his friends' conversations about the movie, "Arachnophobia." I had previously told him that arachnophobia meant fear of spiders. His story title, which is a precise summing up of the narrative, demonstrates his understanding of the plot and his ability to call

upon diverse sources to enrich his own understanding of narratives.

Over the next few months, I noticed Bryan's increasing skill at situating his narrating appropriately in conversations, tailored to the topic at hand. Several factors probably contribute to his recognizing that narrating is a positive strategy for gaining and maintaining the attention be desires from others. For example, in our house narrating is a part of our dinnertime conversations. From describing our day, to talking about friends and families, to telling jokes (at least the ones we think are appropriate for children), both of our children hear and tell stories. Surprisingly, even though we encourage fantasy and invention, to my knowledge Bryan's koala story is only one of three stories he identifies as having "made up." In part, this may be due to his regarding *a story* as something fictional as opposed to real. He asks many questions to determine whether television shows are "real" or "true." In other words, he knows many stories which are about actual events; he may refer to them as stories in conversation but not as a response to a direct request for a story.[4]

Outside of his personal experience narratives or descriptions of life at school, Bryan constructs his stories primarily from narratives he has heard and only secondarily from those which have been read to him. For example, we sometimes tell our children humorous accounts from our own childhoods. We have discovered that Bryan sometimes tells our stories to his friends at school. One day (October 1990) he came home to tell my husband, "I told them about the time a monkey stole your glasses. Did you get the glasses back?" My husband assured Bryan that a zookeeper had retrieved the glasses. "Good," Bryan sighed. "I wanted to make sure I got the story right."

I would like to hypothesize about Bryan's reliance on oral and personal sources, for both content and narrating style, rather than on retelling stories that have been read to him. Using oral sources for his own narrating efforts fits Bryan's strongly social manner. He is very quick to notice and then use whatever gains attention or laughs for other people. He uses storytelling as a means to interact successfully with adults and peers, to gain prestige and attention, and to be viewed as funny. "Funny" is his adjective of highest praise for other admired children.[5]

Other researchers, such as Miller and Moore, write about the close correlation between adult and child narrating style or choice of topics. Similarly, Shirley Brice Heath, *Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms,* describes the close fit between children's narrating behaviors and the adult expectations for children's storytelling in a specific community. But in contrast to Bryan's family and peer situation, she describes a community in which

> children. . . are not allowed to tell stories, unless an adult announces that something which happened to a child makes a good story and invites a retelling. When children are asked to retell such events, they are expected to tell non-fictive stories which "stick to the truth." Adults listen carefully and correct children if their facts are not as the adult remembers them. In contrast, fictive stories which are exaggerations of real-life events, modeled on plots or characters children meet in storybooks, are not accepted as stories, but as "lies," without "a piece of truth." Children grow up being taught to tell *true* stories on themselves. (158)

The acceptance in our family, as well as the interest of his friends, in stories that are perceived to be scary or fantastic may contribute to the impetus for Bryan to narrate both accounts that he conceives to be real and those that he considers to be pretend. For example, he said that the story about the exploding cactus, which he learned from another mother who was carpooling several children to daycamp, is "a true, real story." He also says that his descriptions of his day at school are "a kind of story," but those narratives that he categorizes as jokes are "not exactly stories but are like stories." In short, Bryan recognizes a broad range of narratives available for his own performing but. having defined story as fictional, seems to struggle with categorical terminology for the narratives.

I have provided some indication of the broad categories Bryan uses for stories. Somewhat more ambiguous are the ways in which he evaluates his own storytelling. One day, after I had recorded his narrating, Bryan asked to hear the tape, saying "I wanted to be sure I got the story right." When I asked him to elaborate he answered, "When you tell it you say it out loud and you hear it and if you make a problem, you cross it out." I am not sure what he would regard as a problem in his own storytelling, but I am struck by a non-writer's use of imagery from the written word, "you cross it out."

Bryan's notion of story, and possibly of "getting the story right." does not seem to be based on a sense of plot, theme, or structure. I have heard him ask his sister to repeat a joke a second time so that he "could learn the words." I infer that his conception of story is based on content and specific language. In support of this hypothesis I offer the following example.

In November of 1991, I asked Bryan to tell me a completely new, made-up story. He paused for a moment and then said:

> Once there was a boy named Eric and he wanted a pet. So he went to the pet shop and he tried to buy one. But he wasn't

> tall enough to reach it. So he came another day with his mom and she reached it. She took it out and paid for it. And then they brang it home. And they kissed it and loved it forever. Until it died. The end.

Bryan's father asked him, "What kind of pet?" Bryan answered, "A koala." His older sister, Arianna, mouthed silently, "It's still the Koala story." When she repeated her comment to Bryan, he disagreed adamantly. He did not agree that the stories were similar. He argued that this was a completely new story and was different from the Koala story.

Similarly, he did not see, or did not want to admit to, the similarity between his other made-up (his terminology) story, "Bookboy," and the "Three Little Pigs." In Bryan's story, Bookboy makes a house out of books. When he is challenged by a wolf to open the door, he chants, "Not by my shiny, shiny pages." Bryan said, "That one is about pigs, this one is about Bookboy." Change of character seems to be enough to create a new story.

Some of the changes in the stories Bryan tells and retells seem to be dependent upon what he considers to be the point of the story or a joke. My last example will illustrate both his sense of topicality and his understanding of story meaning.

My husband came home from work one evening and told us all a joke about three men and a genie. Bryan's older sister, Arianna, loved the joke. A week or two later, she told the joke to her grandparents; Bryan was a member of the audience both times. And as evidenced by the following transcript of Arianna narrating, he was present when I specifically asked her to tell this joke.

> Three men were walking down the beach and they came across an old bottle. And like they opened it up and out popped this genie. He said, "Oh thank you, thank you. I've been in there for hundreds of thousands of years. Thank you!" You know and he said, well okay, "Usually I grant, if there's one person I grant them three wishes. But there's three people, there's three of you and I'm going to grant you each one wish." So the first guy said, "Okay, I want to be the smartest person in the world."
>
> [Bryan, "No."
>
> Judith, "Let her tell it her way, it's okay don't you think?"]
>
> [Arianna resumes] Okay, I want to be the smartest person in the world and the genie said, "Granted." And he

> was the smartest person. And the second guy said, um, "I want to be twice as smart as the first guy." And so the genie said, "Okay." --no, he said, "Are you sure?" and the guy said, "Yeah." And the genie turned him twice as smart as the first guy. And so the third guy, who was kind of greedy, said, "I want to be twice as smart as both of the first guys put together." You know. And the genie said, "Are you sure?" And he said, "Yeah." and the genie said, "Are you absolutely positive?" And the guy said, "Yeah, what's wrong with it?" So the genie turned him into a woman. [big grin] (Notes from October 1990; transcribed from tape interview April 16, 1991.)

But Bryan tells the joke slightly differently. A few weeks after Arianna had told the joke to her grandparents, she had a girlfriend, whom I will call Andrea, to dinner. Bryan was working very hard to make Andrea notice him. She was working equally hard to ignore him. At the dinner table, Arianna told a joke about a genie and a divorced woman.

As soon as they finished laughing, Bryan said, "I know a joke like that" and he narrated:

> Once three men were walking down the beach. And they came up on a bottle, and they opened it, and this genie popped out. And said, "Thank you for opening this bottle. I've been in there for years." And, um, he said, "Well, I always give people three wishes, but since there's three of you, I'll give you all one wish." And the first guy said, "I want all, every—I want all the money in the world." And the second guy said, "I want twice as much as the other guy." And the third guy said, "I want twice as much as both those guys together." And guess what he did. He turned them into a girl. [giggles] (Transcribed from tape interview, early April 1991. Refer to handwritten notes from Nov. II, 1991 as well.)

In his earlier tellings of this joke, Bryan, like his dad and sister, had described the men as asking to be smart. But., as illustrated in the narrative reported above and his attempts to correct his sister's narrating, Bryan soon began telling a story in which the men ask for money. Two conversations may shed light on the changes in his version of the joke as transcribed above.

First, when Arianna: had heard her father tell this joke, she exclaimed, "It's a feminist joke." Bryan asked her what that meant. She replied that the joke is saying that women are smarter than men. Bryan looked perturbed and asked me, "Is that true?" I remember assuring him that men and women were equally smart.

Second, in a later conversation, I asked Bryan why he thought the joke was funny. He replied, "Because the genie turns him into a girl. That's why. The genie makes a mistake, and genies aren't supposed to make mistakes." For Bryan, the centerpiece of the joke is the genie's actions, not the implied commentary on sexism. It is also possible that the meaning of the joke as Arianna interprets it is disturbing to Bryan so he has altered the action in the joke but has maintained what is, for him, the coherence of the joke. His change in the joke's internal dialogue is consistent with his understanding of the joke's humor and meaning. His telling of the joke at the dinner table was also particularly well suited to Arianna's preceding joke in terms of the similar topic and genre. Finally, his performance gained him a fleeting moment of approving attention from the visiting friend.

By narrating during conversational interactions, Bryan purposefully enacts the role of the storyteller. In this temporary role, he is able to transcend the limitations imposed by other people's preconceptions of him, including his perceived acquired and achieved status. For Bryan, this role-shifting behavior is an acceptable means of engaging others. In the course of learning how to be a narrator, he has also gained a sense of story meaning.

This is the type of study that could be done of any storyteller, regardless of age. The fact that Bryan contributed this data before he was six makes this study a little remarkable in that the data are not being used to promote other notions about development. Instead, my intent has been to demonstrate that, like all of us, Bryan lives in a social world. As part of his response to others, or his attempt to affect other people, Bryan has learned how and when to be a storyteller. Although we may attempt to extrapolate or reconstruct the complex socio-linguistic manipulations that underlie the storyteller's art, Bryan accounts for his own learning to tell a story in this way; "You hear it and you listen to it very closely and you learn the words or someone teaches you—just like that!"

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NOTES

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of several colleagues. Robert A. Georges encouraged me to observe and analyze my son's narrating and invited me to share my observations with his seminar on narrating; Bill Ellis provided references to many published accounts of the exploding cactus story; Michael O. Jones read and commented on a draft of this article.

1. Bryan did place one restriction on his permission, saying that I also had to talk about his sister, Arianna; I altered my paper in order to do so. Arianna Haut and my husband, Bob Haut, have given their permission to be discussed and/or quoted here.

2. While shopping for groceries I overheard Bryan's older sister asking him to tell her a story; Bryan's narrating differed only in a few minor word changes from the story transcribed above.

3. Stories about the exploding cactus have been widely reported. See, for example, Fine (esp. 156-57), Brunvand (83-94), Brednich, and Klintberg (208).

4. I recently asked Bryan to tell me what a story is. He said, "It's something you say that other people like." He also explained that stories can be true or not true. But when I asked, "What does it mean if you tell me something and I say, 'That's a story'?" He answered, "It means it's not true." The perception that telling a story means telling an untruth is not unique to Bryan. For a discussion of the equating of storytelling as "telling lies" and the difficulties that creates in fieldwork, see Michaela. Jones, "For Myself' 45-49.

5. For a discussion of the social uses of humor, particularly as an appropriate, developmental substitution for more aggressive attention-gaining devices, see McGhee.

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Expressing and Creating Ourselves in Childhood: A Commentary *Simon J. Bronner*

Alexander Chamberlain (1865-1914) would have been surprised by the essays in this volume. Editor of the *Journal of American Folklore* from 1900-1907, he promoted child study in the understanding of culture as the pivot that allows for examination of "yesterday" and "to-morrow," for children as a semiliterate society inherit the oral tradition of the past and use it to shape the future. This concern for historical progression ran through many anthropological works of the Gilded Age, including Chamberlain's other writings on "primitive science and industry." With folklorists taking a prominent role, Gilded Age scholars celebrated and studied children's culture with unprecedented enthusiasm.

Indeed, the *Journal of American Folklore* was a sympathetic home for studies of children's culture, especially since its editors from 1888 to 1907 established their reputations in research of children's folklore. While Chamberlain's predecessor at the journal, William Wells Newell (1839-1907), is often given credit for his groundbreaking collection *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883), it was Chamberlain who most forcefully articulated an early anthropological interpretation of children's culture in *The Child and Childhood in Folk-Thought* (1896). He fixed on what he called the "child-idea" in culture, the view that children represent through folklore the vitality of a culture. Unabashedly romantic and religious, yet appealing to science, Chamberlain took the vantage of "elders" who pass tradition on to children and evaluate them. "Everywhere through the world," Chamberlain wrote, "the activities of childhood have been appealed to, and the race has wonderfully profited by its wisdom, its naiveté, its ingenuity, and its touch of divinity" (403). From a perusal of Chamberlain's impressive tome or Newell's collection, one might gather that children primarily knew simple rhymes, games, and beliefs crafted ages before, probably by adults, and surviving despite the advance of civilization.

Much of children's folklore study in the twentieth century owed at least some debt to the collections and ideas of the Gilded Age folklorists, but replacing evolutionism with ideas of relativism pervading new scholarship in folklore, the essayists in this volume make several important theoretical breaks with our Gilded Age legacy. I offer that the focus on narrating among the essays in this volume is more than the common subject examined;

the focus reveals a rethinking of children's culture in light of new documentary and interpretative techniques. These historical and theoretical winds of change and their implications for comprehending children's culture command my attention in this commentary.

Neither Newell nor Chamberlain offers much in the way of narrative behavior given by children; four brief paragraphs in Chamberlain's study describe "story-telling" *to* children, but none gives an account of what children do with this knowledge, no less recognize narrative creativity (Chamberlain 204-5). Ultimately Chamberlain's book becomes a study of the image of the child in adult lore rather than an exposition of children's ways of thinking, learning, and developing.

For Chamberlain, Newell, and so many others to this day, the essential question to be answered with the materials of childhood is the relation of literary art as a reflection of culture of an early age to the advanced stage of adulthood. Hence we can appreciate the remarkable attention to children's lore by late-nineteenth-century folklorists as a tribute to the industrial progress and rationality supposedly achieved by "modem" adults in the Gilded Age (see Bronner, *Folklife Studies* 119-34). In the predominant evolutionary thinking of the day, children represented the infancy, the origins of adulthood and civilization. On the ladder of progress from savagery, through barbarism, to civilization set up in most evolutionary studies, children were our little savages, noteworthy for their retention of ancient lore and invention of new fantasies.

The influences of Darwinian philosophy and modem aesthetic values should be apparent in the assumptions of many studies of children's folklore from the nineteenth-century to the present. From Darwin's influence is an evolutionary premise about the "natural" movement from simple to complex forms, from children's rhymes to adult narratives. The "specimens" of past lore therefore needed to be collected and arranged into comparable types that showed the evolution of forms according to natural laws (see Bronner, *American Folklore Studies* 1-38). Although Newell recognized the inventiveness of children, he and others nonetheless selected the "traditional" forms showing stability and distribution over generations for comparison (see Fine). Scholars well after Newell chose specimens that had a completed quality to them and drew attention to themselves because of their artistic characteristics. Such arrangements and choices resulted in a picture of cultural stability over an extended time. Another result was a map of cultural space in which isolable groups expressed their differences through lore. Within this map, children and adults, women and men, to name some groups, inhabited separate spheres (see Bronner, *American Folklore Studies* 1-38).

I consider the essayists here as part of a trend toward asking different

kinds of questions based on new assumptions. They share with Chamberlain a concern for the "thought" that folklore reveals, although they would probably phrase it as process rather than form, as "thinking" rather than "thought." Significantly, in their very raising of narrative as an essential part of the child's way of forming and communicating meaning, they suggest a further departure from the evolutionary model of movement from simple to complex forms. They don't collect so much as recognize interactions that employ "stories," many of which may be unique but follow recognizable structures (see Goodwin). The child studied by Judith Haul, for example, responds with narrative behavior to different situations. The understanding of these interactions comes not from the historical forms to which they relate as much as the social needs presented in certain situations and the ways that people communicate with one another. Natural laws commanding cultural development over the globe don't explain the scene presented by Haut as much as do the functions and structures of the moment. The essential questioning thus becomes behavioral rather than naturalistic. The questioning is not about the lines from "yesterday" into "tomorrow," but rather about the ways people express themselves taking cues from any number of simultaneous influences, and indeed create themselves through expression.

The breaks that this questioning of expression make with Gilded Age approaches are evident in the emphasis placed today on the keywords of development, learning, and communication. By using development, many researchers today draw attention to varying rates of growth and varieties of expression among children. Its is granted that children strive toward the maturity of adulthood, but one also recognizes that children have distinctive behaviors that don't necessarily carry over in to adulthood. In looking at development, researchers also try to get around the misleading opposition of childhood and adulthood as unified groups. Children, the researchers point out, have individual profiles and acquire different skills and tendencies according to a wide array of factors—including gender, class, ethnicity, location, and family. Even taking into account the predominance of shared age-related traits among children, one finds more complexity to the subtle difference between, as one child exclaimed in an interview to me, "fifth and sixth grade!" (see Fine, 17083, for discussion of "circular generations"). He was not talking about educational skills as much a cultural property of play and narrative styles appropriate to the group with whom he spent most of his time and the environment in which it was spent (see Virtanen for a study using these considerations). In addition, many interviewers of youth note the insistence of children ("kids," children prefer to say) on their age not as five or six, but as five and a half or six and a half.

Within the broad neutral native category of "kids" lies an implication of change, physical and social-and cultural. The rapid physical and cognitive changes that occur in childhood, not to mention the social clustering of children in school, tempt us to categorize it separately. Yet contexualizing aging with the life course in the investigation of children's lives offers a closer look at the ways children use lore to respond to developmental and social changes (Bronner "Left to Their Own Devices").

Through the life course, individuals learn from a variety of sources about responding to different situations. During the late nineteenth century, evolutionary assumptions led some scholars to imagine that literacy and technology naturally replace oral forms of learning. Yet experience shows that people surrounded by technology demand the kind of learning we usually associate with folklore-by word of mouth, by imitation and demonstration, by custom. Indeed, literacy and technology often become tools to engage narrative behavior, as Elizabeth Tucker's study shows. Other examples might be the use of photocopiers for passing traditional humor and computers for folk games. The important lesson is that people use folklore for the kind of powerful learning and communication it offers and are willing to adjust it to new technology so as to engage its qualities.

The new awareness of children' s complexity and ability that informs essays here by C. W. Sullivan III and Judith Haut leads us to consider the remarkable rapidity with which children learn language and the distinctiveness of the first few years of life (see Brown; Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). Within their first year, children become aware quickly of sequences of words that carry meaning and evoke responses from adults (Brown 1973). In multilingual households, children can quickly select different codes of speech and often exaggerate their styles.[1] All to little recognized are the culturally variable developments of ordered "baby talk" and the creative uses of play languages by children (see Sherzer; Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett).

Explaining the mechanisms by which children recognize some word sequences as "stories" and find ways to strategically use them essentially challenges scholars to question social interaction and development. Even before language is acquired, children become aware of culturally defIned spaces that suggest narrative structures in that they have directions and boundaries. In American culture, the rectangle-in the crib, the room, the play block-is an particularly ubiquitous model (see Bronner, *Grasping Things* 15-17). In many cultures, circular spaces dominate and may be investigated for a relation to narrative structure. In one study of the Mescalero Apache, for example, Claire Farrer found that houses, dances,

and children's games such as Tag show strong circularity in contrast to Anglo-American linearity (Farrer; see also Bronner "Anglo-American Aesthetic").

While C.W. Sullivan III asks readers to contemplate the influence of the reading process in the ways that children perceive their own narrating, he also notes the processes that occur prior to reading. Before adults "read" to children, they typically use play to enumerate objects on the body as points of reference for narrative sequencing. Among the first playful performances recalled from tradition offered by adults to children are finger or toe formulas. In French a formula uses the structure of the family in a sequence from the thumb to the little finger:

> Voici le pére
> Voici la mére
> Voici la demoiselle
> Voici le fils
> Voici le petit rincouincouin. [Shiver 223]

Some of my Pennsylvania-German informants recall a formula using the occupations on the farm:

> Der ist der Bauer [farmer]
> Der ist die Bauerin [farmer's wife]
> Der ist der Knecht [farmhand]
> Der ist die Dien'rn [farmhand's wife]
> Und ides kleine wutzklein in der wiegen [piglet in a cradle].
> [see Stoudt]

A common sequence played on the toes in American culture is:

> This little piggy wen to market
> This little piggy stayed home
> This little piggy had roast beef
> This little piggy had none
> And this little piggy went wee, wee, wee.

Sometimes known inaccurately as "rhymes," these expressions offered by adults usually before they read to a child are more in the way of verbal formulas accompanied by physical action that make the infant aware of itself. The verbal stress and elongation in the conclusion accompanying the grabbing of the toes or fingers gives the sense of an ending that relies on what preceded it. Are these expressions recognized as stories? In some German sources, these expressions are called *Fingermächen*, or "finger tales" (Shiver). If American children do not recognize them as

stories, then they may employ their structures in their own playful expressions using repetition and rhythm. The formulaic rhythm of "This Little Piggy," for instance, relates closely to the youthful narrative Elizabeth Tucker identifies as "In a Dark, Dark Wood":

> Okay, you walk down this long, black road and there's this big, urn, black house and you go in this big black room and there's-- (speeds up) In the big black room there's a big black closet, in the big black closet there's a big black tuxedo, in the big black tuxedo there's a big black pocket, in the big black pocket is a big black box, in the big black box is a red jelly bean. (laughs) [Tucker 483; see also Opie and Opie 36].

Even later in childhood, the rhythm and repetition characterizing this narrative form appears in ghost stories often given at camps and slumber parties. One such story is sometimes identified as a subunit under the heading "Johnny, I Want My Liver" (a subtype, as it has been categorized by folklorists, of Aarne- Thompson Tale-Type 366), although the narrative technique repeats in many stories used by children.

> This lady gave this boy named Johnny a dollar to go to the store to get some liver. But he spent it on something else before he got the liver, and he had to bring this lady her liver. So he saw this graveyard right next to the store. So he unburied a guy, and he got the guy's liver and brought it to the lady. The lady said, "this is a real good liver." But that night they heard, *"I want my liver back, I want my liver back, I want my liver back." Then they hear, "I'm on your first step, I want my liver back, I want my liver back, I want my liver back." Then "I'm on your porch, I want my liver back, I want my liver back. I'm in your living room, I want my liver back, I want my liver back. I'm in the bedroom, I want my liver back, I want my liver back"* (teller grabs listener in abdomen) [Bronner, *American Children's Folklore* 158; see also Opie and Opie 36; Virtanen 76; Tucker 370-73,495-96]

And in so-called invented stories, one can discern similar structures and rhythms, such as this one told repeatedly by a girl from two to three years old that employs the familiar family structure along with the repetition of actions leading to a conclusion:

> 2/22/75
>
> The man stayed home
> the children went out
> then a Cookie Monster came

then the Cookie Monster went away
and the mommy was angry
and then the father was angry
and then the children went out again
then the father went out
then the mother went out
they went to the park
then they went home
and then the father was doing work
and then it was getting late
the children went to sleep
and the mommy and the father went to sleep

8/13/75

The mother went out
then the father went out
then the mother went out again
and then the father went out
then the children went out
then policeman came
the mother came back from the meeting
then the father came back from the meeting
then a Cookie Monster came
and the policeman came again
then the Cookie Monster went away [Sutton-Smith 53]

With these "texts," we long to know the social interactions and cues that gave rise to them to understand how participants understood their meaning. When these texts are construed as narrative, there is an assumption that they are in themselves part of a sequence. There is an additional assumption that while the story draws attention to the text, "narrative" directs inquiry to the performance, some of which may be out of the awareness of the "story-teller." As Judith Haut's essay demonstrates, the sequence around the narrative may involve conversation, or play, signals that aid in the recognition of the beginning and ending of "story" and its different meanings in various situations.

The use of "narrative" to describe such sequences deserves discussion because it illustrates the different questions being asked by the essayists in this issue. The use of "narrative" is more characteristic of present scholarship than the Gilded Age folklorists (see Bronner 1987). Narrative is a technical term that refers to the result of a process (narrating in context) rather than the form of relating information in an organized way. "Narrative" is conspicuously absent in folkloristic dictionaries such as the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore. Mythology and Legend* (1950) and

General Ethnological Concepts (1960). Elliott Oring, however, made the term central in his chapter on "Folk Narratives" in the textbook *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres* (1986). "Narrative," be declared, "is another word for story." Then why not use the more familiar "story"? The answer lies in the suggestion of process of "narrating" in narrative. Oring continues, "Narrating is a method by which an experience is transformed into verbal account" (121). In an even more recent source, the *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (1991), Robert Winthrop claims that "one trend discernible, in both anthropology and folklore studies, is a concern for understanding narrative as a communicative performance, 'a totality encompassing not only the verbal story but the entire narrative experience, auditory and visual, of spectator and actor.'" Essentially, narrative, Winthrop argues, brings out the "expressive dimension of culture" (126).

By using narrative, researchers blur the lines between the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of culture. Narrative suggests the organization of experience in a number of ways. Non-verbal customs such as games played in childhood also follow narrative structure that culturally varies. In many American chasing games, for example, dramatic tension is created in a tripartite narrative structure: a departure from home, a chase, and return home (Dundes). In what ways does the parent's playing of "Peek-a-boo," one of the first traditional forms of play experienced between adult and child in American culture affect an understanding of narrative sequence? The structure moves from the bidden face to the face revealed accompanied by a rhyme, "Peek-a-boo, I see you!" This frame around the repeated play activity causes delight in the child. Then among the first organized games played by children among themselves is Hide-and-Go-Seek (Bronner, *American Children's Folklore* 176-78). One can also notice that a number of spontaneously "invented" fantasies in verbal and non-verbal form reported in *The Folkstories of Children* by Brian Sutton-Smith (1981) or *City Play* by Amanda Dargan and Steven Zeitlin (1990) involve the dramatic tension of disappearance and recovery.

Of particular significance to the analysis of learning and development raised by these books and the essays here is the questioning of the uses to which narrating is put. Strictly speaking, children don't need stories to communicate, but they demand stories, and quickly employ narrative behavior for various ends. From their early and subsequent experiences, the question arises, bow do children perceive the functions of narrative behavior? Is their demand based on the aid to learning that stories provide? Do they recall the entertaining reinforcement of the finger rhyme, the social organizing effect of the game, and the communicative clarity of putting ideas in story? How are distinctions made between the

televised story and the told story? Or for that matter, between the true and fantastic story? How do they perceive the strategies for recounting a tale to an adult or to other children? Judith Haut keenly observes the importance of social awareness to the kinds of performances she heard from a single child, while C.W. Sullivan III incisively questions the ways that children learn structural competence for performance. Sullivan's inquiry begins at the point of literary understanding of story, but suggests a broader inquiry into the relations of narrative to children's cognitive development. To view such relations and the strategies for employing narrative, the emphasis needs to be on the expressive behavior used, rather than the isolation of finished forms. The categories of pre- and post applied to the development of narrative forms, I'm afraid, reflect the old evolutionary opposition of child and adult, and may be misleading because they suggest a magical transformation caused by natural law rather than the process by which expressions are used.

When talking of process, researchers look to the communication that can be observed and documented. This discussion differs from the collections of specimens because in the study of communication the lore emerges as a small part of an encompassing event. Judith Haut, for example, documents several situations in which a story emerged in response to the conversation between participants in the situation. In some cases, the story was offered because one was specifically asked for: "Tell me a story," someone asked. On other occasions, the story came out as part of conversation to impose an effect on listeners. What Haut is describing is a process of creativity rather than one of creations. Creativity is employed to bring old and new elements, as well as individual and social concerns, together in response to the social situation; it suggests a process that combines tradition and invention. The "creation" of concern to Chamblerlain implied the separation of folklore survivals from new inventions. As the essays in this issue show, various kinds of learning intertwine as do creativity and tradition. The essays suggest therefore that our driving ethnographic task is to examine the various roles of tradition in the communication of meaning. No longer considering the survival of folklore the main issue, they turn to the creativity of tradition in everyday life (see Bronner *Creativity and Tradition).*[2]

I'm not surprised by the themes presented in the essays here. As Chamberlain and Newell used folklore research to reflect on the hierarchical industrial age rising in their Gilded Age society, so the trend today is to contemplate the swirling social currents of an electronic era. More than an objective anthropological endeavor envisioned by Chamberlain, the ethnographic task now is broadly interdisciplinary and simultaneously involves us as participants and observers. One might argue that the

observations made by the essayists are at least a response to our ability to document ourselves in the communication technology that in itself stresses process. From this communication technology, we learn more about the simultaneity and spontaneity of everyday life, and we are reminded of how little we remember of ourselves from our own childhoods. We need more attention to children's folklore in an interactional framework to move beyond the blinding influence of the "child-idea."

Can we separate what happens in childhood from the "child-idea," the images we have created as adults for the age? Priscilla Ord approaches this subject by examining the adaptations of children's language and lore in books written for children. Her discussion reminds me of my experience with reality and image in *American Children's Folklore* (1988). In the book, I recorded children's traditions as I heard them, and that commonly included language somehow considered fit only for adults. I received less than kind comments for suggesting in the book that children's expressiveness frequently takes on a harsh tone. "I swear that my child doesn't say those things," I heard. Yet many open-minded parents came back to me after I asked them to ask their children about the content of their "stories" and told me that, to their surprise, their children indeed expressed themselves and created themselves outside of adult limits. In recording the creativity of children's tradition, I violated the idea of childhood as evolving from innocence to experience. I also violated the notion of children's expression--sometimes referred to as "ditties"--as quaint or "childish" art.

What may be surprising as well in these essays to some readers is the turn from art to expression, for the popular study of children's lore still has a tendency to identify the gems of a diminutive art. In the questioning of structure and process in this special issue, I hope we come to appreciate more the competence each child has for creativity, rather than the concern of Chamberlain for "those rude scribblings and quaint efforts at delineations, whence, in the course of ages, have been evolved. . . the marvelous creations of a Rubens and an Angelo" (Chamberlain 3). Even Priscilla Ord's essay, apparently concerned with literary devices used by accomplished authors, reveals sources of narration in the everyday language of children. The "creativity of tradition" thus applies as much to authors as to storytellers. In Judith Haut's essay, we learn that there is no right version of the child's favorite story; the child employs the structure of what he recognizes as "story" in several situations to create something new. In Elizabeth Tucker's essay, we learn the ways that children interpret packaged stories for themselves. Indeed, all these essays touch on how narrating or storytelling as cultural praxis becomes a way of knowing (see Bronner "Art, Performance, and Praxis").

If the major theme presented in the various essays for consideration is the appreciation for the complexity of children's communication using narrative behavior, then the subtheme is the need to understand children as they perceive their situation in addition to the way we perceive them. These essays signal, in sum, the recognition of tell-tale signs of human thinking. Their suggestions inspire an uncovering of the ways that discernment is connected to the telling, the ways as folklore offers, that every child sees, or should I say, tells which way the wind blows.

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NOTES

1. To give an example in my home state of the implication of multilingualism on the development of speech and narrative styles, 6.9 percent of Pennsylvanians speak a language other than English at home. Yet too often, American researchers assume narrative ability exclusively in English. The Pennsylvania-German folklorists early on discussed multilingual abilities to express folklore among children; see Gladfelter, Kreider, and Spotts; Shoemaker; Stoudt. A more recent exception to the American tendency is found in Brady on Navajo children's stories, although no texts are offered in Navajo.

2. Similar to the guiding concept of "narrative," the use of "creativity of tradition" underscores the emergent quality of expressive behavior and its purposeful uses in various situations. This folkloristic consideration of the "creativity of tradition" cuts across material and verbal expressions. See Crowley; Evans; Bronner, *Grasping Things;* Briggs; Jones.

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Notes and Announcements

The Stotter Press announces that the 1993 Storyteller's Calendar is available for purchase. Designed and compiled by storyteller and Children's Folklore Section member Ruth Stotter, the Storyteller's Calendar is packed with information of interest to folklorists and storytellers and is illustrated with pictures of folk materials, from storytelling dolls to Chinese and Mexican papercuts. The calendar sells for $10.00 (plus $2.00 shipping and handling, up to 3 calendars); California residents add sales tax. Call 1-800-637-2256 to order by Visa or MasterCard; or write: The Stotter Press, Box 726, Stinson Beach, CA 94970.

The Clearfield Company has begun a *Folklore Classics* series. This series has five titles currently available, including W. W. Newell's *Games and Songs of American Children,* and will regularly reprint out-of-print and sought-after titles in American folklore. Each volume will have an introduction by W. K. McNeil, and each will be printed in a limited quantity. Most titles sell for between $15.00 and $30.00. For additional information, call Joe Garonzik or Rachel Owings at 1-800-296-6687; or write: Clearfield Company, 200 East Eager Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.

Jeff Warner (continuing in the tradition of Anne and Frank Warner) and Jeff Davis have released *Old Time Songs for Kids.* This cassette tape of traditional music contains songs like "Old Chisholm Trail" and "Green Willow Tree" (a composite of versions of "The Golden Vanity"); they are certainly songs that children might learn, but they are not songs that have been collected from children. That said, *Old Time Songs for Kids* is an excellent collection performed by fine singers and players. The tape is accompanied by a book containing the lyrics of the songs and headnotes which provide a very brief history of the song. For information, write: Jeff Warner and Jeff Davis, Traditional Music, 3015 Ordway Street NW, Washington, DC 20008.

The Children's Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society annually offers the W.W. Newell Prize (which includes a cash award of $400.00) for the best undergraduate or graduate student essay on a topic in children's folklore. Students must submit their own papers, and published papers are eligible. Instructors are asked to encourage students with eligible papers to enter the competition.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and on white bond paper. On the first page include the author's name, academic address, home address, and telephone numbers. Deadline for each year's competition is March 1st.

Submit papers or write for additional information: Judith Haut, 2733 Halsey Road, Topanga, CA 90290.

The *Children's Folklore Review* is available only to members of the Children's Folklore Section of the American Folklore Society. To become a member, send $10.00 yearly dues to Danielle Roemer, Literature and Language, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

CFR requests manuscripts that are prepared using laser printed text or letter quality text. We request that authors using typewriters or dot-matrix printers have their manuscripts redone and a laser printed copy made. This will enable us to scan the copy, thereby eliminating rekeying the manuscript.

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